



**PLANNING COMMISSION & CENTRAL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT
AGENDA
ROSE ROOM
CREEKMORE PARK COMMUNITY CENTER
5:00 P.M.
JUNE 13, 2017**

1. Propelling Downtown Forward Plan

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Memorandum

To: City Planning Commission
From: Wally Bailey, Director of Development Services
Date: June 8, 2017
RE: Propelling Downtown Forward

A joint meeting of the Planning Commission and the Central Business Improvement Board will be held for the purpose of reviewing a presentation on the Propelling Downtown Forward final plan. Some of you may have attended the presentation of the draft version of this plan which occurred on January 31, 2017. Following the presentation of the plan and a question and answer session, the Planning Commission and Central Business Improvement Board will be asked to recommend the plan to the Board of Directors. The Propel Downtown Forward plan will help guide future decisions for the Downtown and CBID.

Attached is a copy of the plan's Executive Summary. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.



Executive Summary

While the private sector spearheaded the Propelling Downtown Forward initiative, a key part in creating the comprehensive downtown master plan was input from citizens, local businesses, and municipal leaders. The 64.6 Downtown Board is pleased to offer the completed Propelling Downtown Forward Comprehensive Masterplan to the City of Fort Smith. Achieving the goals in the master plan is predicated upon new zoning and design guidelines being adopted for key areas (“character zones”) set out in the plan.

To this end, the 64.6 Board expresses its thanks to the City’s Board of Directors in recognizing the benefits of a different approach to zoning and design in and around Downtown Fort Smith. We recommend the City utilize this master plan to develop form-based code zoning and design guidelines that enhance the character zones identified in the master plan.

Because this comprehensive master plan is over 100 pages in length, the 64.6 Board would like to draw your attention to a few specific points we view as key components for a sustainable, vibrant, safe, people-focused, walkable downtown.

- Prioritization of downtown mobility improvements with the implementation of two-way street conversions and open space areas.
 1. North A & B Streets corridor along with the expansion of Cisterna Park into Garrison Plaza (*See pages 25 “Cisterna” and 47-48*);
 2. North 10th & 11th Streets corridor to include Alternative 2: A Revitalized Gateway from Grand Avenue (*See pages 26 “10th & 11th Streets” and 49-52*);
 3. Followed by Towson Avenue, and Riverfront Drive (*See pages 25 “The Riverfront”, 26 “Medical Area/Towson Avenue”, and 53-56*).
- To effectively implement the downtown mobility strategy outlined above, the truck bypass-route (*See pages 60- 64 Truck Traffic Downtown*) must be addressed. The City should work with trucking industry and business leaders and property owners in the spirit of collaboration and compromise toward a solution. It is important to note, the Frontier Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has placed in its July 01, 2017 - June 30, 2018 budget a downtown traffic impact study – to be completed by a planning and engineering firm.
- Although the project cost estimates are based on the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department Program Management Division Weighted Average Unit Prices, these estimates must be fully vetted by the City of Fort Smith Engineering Department and/or a local engineering firm. (*See pages 73, 97-102*)



- According to the five-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP), \$1,744,000 will be spent on the modification of North B Street from 5th Street west to Riverfront Drive. In addition, \$6,565,173 is estimated to be spent from 2016-2021 for the proposed Kelley Highway extension from Midland Blvd. to Riverfront Drive. The CIP Committee opted to push out the project to begin 2021. The 64.6 Board recommends reallocating these funds to downtown infrastructure enhancements prioritized under downtown mobility.
- Gateway Planning identified through the stakeholder input sessions that “streets” was being interpreted in such a way that sidewalks were not an eligible use of the funds. Gateway has provided a clear definition of streets and determined the City’s ordinance No. 72-85 captures sidewalks in its definition of “streets.” Therefore, the construction and maintenance of sidewalks along City streets is an appropriate and legitimate investment of City street sales tax funds, regardless of whether the street accompanying the sidewalk undergoes improvement. *(See page 77 Investing in Sidewalks)*
- With parking rates well below the market for comparable cities and the need to have a financially feasible parking management strategy, the 64.6 Board fully supports the recommendations of Gateway Planning presented in this plan. *(See pages 75-77 Parking Management Strategy)*

The following themes radiated from the various interviews and support the aforementioned prioritization and full masterplan.

- Make Downtown a **unique destination** within North & West Arkansas.
- **More vibrant**, pedestrian-friendly, business-friendly and resident-friendly Downtown.
- Downtown needs **more parks and open spaces** for family friendly activities and events.
- Residents dependent on vehicles to conduct their daily activities.
- Develop apartments, live/work units, townhomes, cottage homes, and other residential options.
- Downtown is **not walkable**.
- Trolley-tram route expansion to **improve connectivity** and serve as a people-mover, not as solely a tourist attraction.
- Truck traffic down Garrison Avenue and through Downtown is a problem due to safety and perception concerns.
- Recalibrate and **streamline City development process** to enable Downtown projects to be implemented in a more collaborative and success-driven manner.

With the private sector’s investment in this downtown masterplan, the City of Fort Smith has a plan that speaks to the need of both its citizens and business community. The 64.6 Downtown Board requests the City continue collaboration with the private sector while accelerating its support to Propel Downtown Forward.